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ABSTRACT

This publication provides a framework for spiritual leadership and mutual support for and among Catholic school administrators. The group sessions, written by Catholic school administrators, focus on a theme or season to pray, share, celebrate, relax, and show support for one another. Each section presents sample formats for a gathering, including suggested readings, music, and questions for discussion. The sections include the following areas: leadership, a day in the life of Jesus as an educator, Jesus and communication, trust in God's power, the vision of the school as holy ground, prayer, play, hope, Christmas, and the definition of penance. (LMI)

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Models of Shared Prayer and Collegial Support for Catholic Educational Leaders

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Colleagues in Faith

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IN
FAITH

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Excerpts

These materials reflect the generous assistance of facilitators for Shepherding the Shepherds. Many submitted ideas and samples for follow-up sessions. Some of the sessions reflect ideas or excerpts received, combined in new ways. When we used the entire session, we acknowledged the authors. Again, we wish to thank the facilitators for making these materials possible.

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FOREWORD

Leaders in Catholic education, whether they carry the title president, school head, principal, assistant principal, dean, or other, often are drawn together around layered business agendas, common critical issues, marketing or planning strategies. Colleagueship and networks that develop are administratively oriented and generally quite productive.

This publication, *Colleagues in Faith*, provides a framework for another dimension of Catholic school leadership: that of spiritual leadership and mutual support for and among those called to the demanding and critical role of administration in Catholic education.

In some respects, these sessions written by Catholic school educators, are an extension of the NCEA Shepherd's retreat program. Administrators completing the retreat are encouraged to form groups that will continue to meet in support of one another as faith-filled persons and spiritual leaders. Requests from these groups for materials to use for these gatherings was the impetus for this publication.

At the heart of these sessions, as at the core of the Shepherd's retreat, is the image of a *caring* God—the good Shepherd. It is this focus of *care* that permeates the following pages: the *care* of a loving God as we are guarded and guided and the *care* shown to us through the pervasive goodness and kindness of colleagues and others. The familiar words, "the Lord is our shepherd we shall not want," express care that is material as well as moral. Wildflower meadows and quiet streams are paired with light in the darkness and assurance in the face of the enemy. We rely upon these words to be a promise as well as a poetic image.

The themes presented here are the result of a highly collaborative effort of writing, reviewing and piloting all done by those who know best—Catholic school educators. Written by those who are or have been in great part school administrators, these sessions provide groups with the opportunity to gather around a theme or season to pray, share, celebrate, relax and show their support for one another.

Key to the success of these gatherings is the role of the leader who convenes the faith group, establishes the atmosphere, and involves others in providing context, insight and reflection.

Though these sessions were developed in response to the request of educators who had made a Shepherd's retreat, they are offered to any Catholic educational leaders who find them helpful. With *care* and in *care*, may we support one another on our spiritual and professional journeys.

–Mary Frances Taymans, SND
Editor

LEADER INTRODUCTION

The role of the leader is integral to the effective implementation of these sessions. Adapting to the nature and size of the group as well as the available setting are key components. The suggested time frame is relative.

Before convening the group, review the directions. Some sessions ask participants to bring something along or often have the option for an article to be read ahead of time.

Each session stands alone, so select a theme that best fits a particular gathering

Colleagues in Faith is an on-going colleague-to-colleague leadership program. You can continue the momentum by sending to NCEA any additional materials you develop for or include in your gatherings.

We would love to hear from you.

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SESSION ONE

GEESE AND WIND

LEADERSHIP

Leader Preview

Materials	Tapes of nature sounds or contemplative music; tape of "Wind Beneath My Wings" by Bette Midler; tape recorder; Glory and Praise, vol. 2; candle; hard fruits
Time	Fall of the year; approximately 60 to 90 minutes
Setting	If possible, meet some place where the group can appreciate nature's beauty and spaciousness
Preparation	The opening prayer can be read by one or more readers. Play soft, reflective music during the reading of "The Goose Story." "The Goose Story" can be read aloud by the leader or a participant who has had a chance to prepare for the reading. After reading "The Goose Story," the leader distributes the reflective questions and gives the participants about 30 minutes to reflect on the story and questions—outdoors if possible. Then gather together again as a group and discuss the questions. During the concluding prayer service, the leader reads the part of "God" and the group reads "Christian." These two parts can also be read by two participants.

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OF GEESE AND WIND

OPENING PRAYER

Show me, O Lord,
at the beginning of this new year,
that I am not in charge of the art of administration;
or in dispensing this gift of leadership
that you have given me.

Grant me, O divine Creator,
A beginner's enthusiasm and eagerness.

With this beginner's mind,
fresh and open,
allow me to see countless ways
to explore the promise this year holds—
this Gift from you.

Grace me with your wisdom and insight
as I begin this new year.
May this year be rich in an abundant harvest
of the fruits of Kindness and Love;
May all who encounter me each day
see Christ reflected in my every action.

Amen.

(prayer inspired by Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim, Edward Hays. "A Morning Prayer," p. 168.)

Leader — It is often in nature that we encounter simple, yet profound, messages. With this in mind, let's listen to "The Goose Story."

Leader — Let's take about 30 minutes to reflect individually on the story and these questions:

1. What are some ways I try to provide the "uplift" to my "flock" as I lead?

2. What direction am I headed in? Is there a specific direction for this year? To what extent do I think the rest of the "geese" are headed in the same direction?

3. What "demanding jobs" can I delegate to best utilize the strengths and talents of the faculty?

4. How do the "geese" I lead "honk from behind"? In other words, how do they encourage and support me?

7. In what ways can this group provide me with "uplift" and encouragement?

DISCUSSION

CONCLUDING PRAYER SERVICE

REFLECTION SONG "The Wind Beneath My Wings"

PRAYER	"Growth in Awareness of My Daily Walk with God"
Introduction:	He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)
God	Let us walk together, walk humbly with your God.
Christian	O Lord, you have searched me and you know me...you know when I sit down and when I stand up. You hem me in, behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. (Ps. 139:1, 5)
God	Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you...when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame will not consume you. .Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you...I appointed you a prophet to the nations. (Is. 43:1-4; Jer. 1:5)
Christian	Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am a child. (Jer. 1:6)
God	Do not say 'I am only a child'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, do not be afraid of them, for I am to deliver you. (Jer. 1: 7-8)
Christian	Woe is me! I am lost, for I have unclean lips;...yet my eyes have seen Yahweh (Is. 6:5)
God	[I] do not deal with you according to your sins, nor repay you according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is [my] steadfast love towards those who fear [me]. (Ps. 103)
Christian	I am deeply troubled by your words....How can this be? (Lk. 1:26ff)
God	Fear not....The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you....Nothing is impossible with God. (Lk. 1:26ff)
Christian	I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word. (Lk. 1:26ff)
God	The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised....If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (Lk. 9:22-23)

Christian	A thorn was given me in the flesh,...to keep me from being too elated...I appeal to the Lord about this, that it will leave me. (2 Cor. 12:7ff)
God	My grace is sufficient for you; for power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor. 12:9)
Christian	I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection... (Ph. 3:10)
God	You will be content with weakness and distress for the sake of Christ, for whenever you are weak, then you are strong. (2 Cor. 12:10)
Christian	I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give me a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know clearly, so that, with the eyes of my heart enlightened, I may know what is the hope to which God has called me. (Ep. 1:17-18)
God	My power is at work in you...and is able to accomplish abundantly more than you can ask or imagine. (Ep. 3:20)
Christian	To you be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ep. 3:21)

(Orientations, vol. 1, helps for prayer collected, adapted and composed by J. Veltri Loyola House: Guelph, Ontario, Canada)

Leader — As we close, are there any persons or intentions we want to bring to our prayer?

SONG — Glory and Praise, vol. 2, #126, "On Eagle's Wings" or another appropriate song

–Session written by Margaret Kingdom

THE GOOSE STORY

Next fall, when you see geese heading south for the Winter... flying along in V formation...you might consider what science has discovered as to why they fly that way:

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following.

By flying in V formation the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range, than if each bird flew on its own.

PEOPLE WHO SHARE A COMMON DIRECTION
AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY
CAN GET WHERE THEY ARE GOING MORE QUICKLY AND EASILY
BECAUSE
THEY ARE TRAVELLING ON THE THRUST OF ONE ANOTHER.

When a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone...and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front.

IF WE HAVE AS MUCH SENSE AS A GOOSE,
WE WILL STAY IN FORMATION WITH THOSE
WHO ARE HEADED THE SAME WAY WE ARE.

When the head goose gets tired it rotates back in the wing...and another goose flies point.

IT IS SENSIBLE TO TAKE TURNS DOING DEMANDING JOBS...

Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

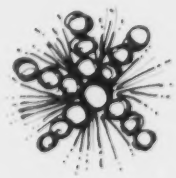
WHAT DO WE SAY WHEN WE "HONK FROM BEHIND"?

Finally...and this is important...when a goose gets sick, or is wounded by gunshots, and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection.

They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or until it dies; and only then do they launch out on their own or with another formation to catch up with their group.

IF WE HAVE THE SENSE OF A GOOSE,
WE WILL STAND BY EACH OTHER LIKE THAT.

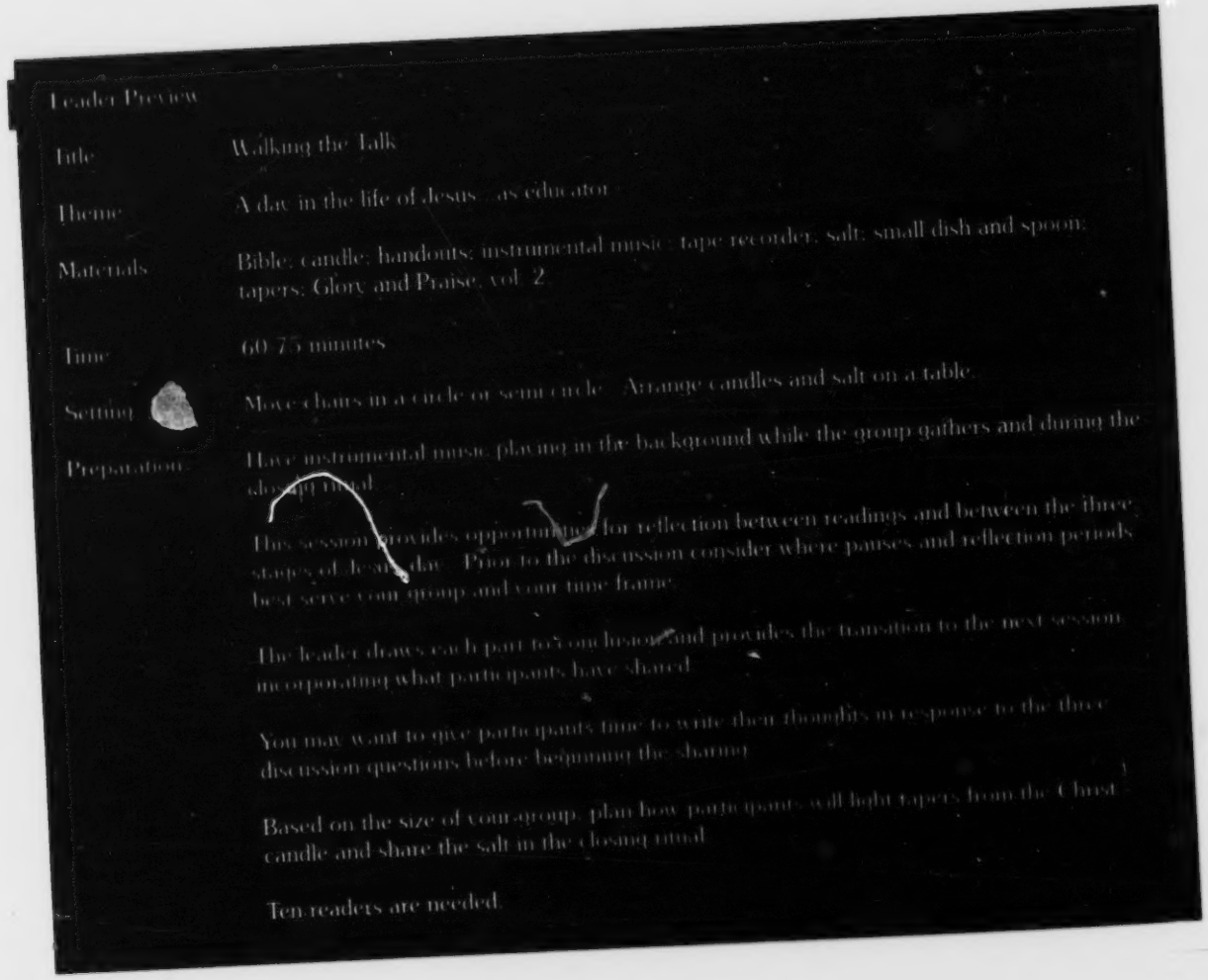
(Author unknown)



SESSION TWO

WALKING THE TALK

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS AS EDUCATOR



Leader Preview

Title	Walking the Talk
Theme	A day in the life of Jesus...as educator
Materials	Bible; candle; handouts; instrumental music; tape recorder; salt; small dish and spoon; tapers; Glory and Praise, vol. 2
Time	60-75 minutes
Setting	Move chairs in a circle or semi-circle. Arrange candles and salt on a table.
Preparation	Have instrumental music playing in the background while the group gathers and during the closing ritual. This session provides opportunities for reflection between readings and between the three stages of Jesus' day. Prior to the discussion consider where pauses and reflection periods best serve your group and your time frame. The leader draws each part to a conclusion and provides the transition to the next session, incorporating what participants have shared. You may want to give participants time to write their thoughts in response to the three discussion questions before beginning the sharing. Based on the size of your group, plan how participants will light tapers from the Christ candle and share the salt in the closing ritual. Ten readers are needed.

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WALKING THE TALK

Leader — We come together around the portrait entitled "A Day in the Life of Jesus ... as Educator." This word portrait is based on the reading of Mark 1:21-39. Mark's Gospel, as most of us know, is the "oldest" Gospel, and it presents Jesus as Rabbi, meaning teacher. Today we are going to follow Jesus through one 24 hour period as he teaches, heals and prays.

In this gospel passage Jesus becomes a model for us as educators and administrators. His day follows three basic stages: work or ministry; time with family and friends; and, the search. Let us follow Jesus on his journey.

WORK/MINISTRY

Reader 1 — Reading Mark 1:21-22 and reflection
They went to Capernaum; and when sabbath came, Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

In these two verses, we note Jesus is depicted as "a person on the move." We see him going to the Synagogue at Capernaum to teach. In this stage of his ministry, Jesus is shown as someone who speaks with authority.

Pause

Reader 2 — Reading Mark 1:23-26 and reflection
Just then there was in their synagogue a person with an unclean spirit, who cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked the spirit, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

Jesus ministers to the essentially healthy while simultaneously ministering to the "dis eased." We see Jesus dealing calmly and compassionately with the disruptions in his "plan."

How do I deal with daily disruptions? To what extent am I a healing, compassionate presence in my school?

Pause

Reader 3 Reading Mark 1:27 and reflection
They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching -- with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

The people were astonished at Jesus' teachings for two reasons 1) the teaching was new, and 2) it was a teaching with authority.

Pause

Reader 4 Reading Mark 1:28 and reflection
At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Jesus' reputation grew rapidly. The educator was known beyond the school. You, too, are spoken about in the homes of (your city).

Leader Let us reflect on the strengths that are needed to cope as an administrator. How do we support the child who brings personal/family suffering to the classroom; the teacher who is coping with frustrations or pain; the peer who is on a journey so similar to our own.

Reflection/Sharing

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Leader Jesus' ministry at the second stage focuses on his time with family and friends.

Reader 5 Reading Mark 1:29-31 and reflection
As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

In this reading, we witness a non-verbal healing by Jesus. A simple touch of the hand is enough to bring

health to Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus' work continues at home among family and friends. We as educators have a life beyond the school.

Pause

Readier 6 Reading Mark 1:32-34 and reflection
That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

As Jesus attends to those in need, his approach is to observe and note. People continually made demands on Jesus; on duty and off, day and night.

What "off duty" healing demands are made on me? How am I a healer in these situations?

Reflection and sharing

THE SEARCH

Leader The third stage in Jesus' ministry can be called "the search."

Reader 7 Reading Mark 1:35 and reflection
In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

Early in the morning Jesus seeks a time of quiet. How often do I take time to go physically and/or mentally to a quiet place?

Reader 8 Reading Mark 1:36-37 and reflection
And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you."

Everyone is searching for Jesus. How strongly do I identify with these verses?

Reader 9 Reading Mark 1:38-39 and reflection
He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for

that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

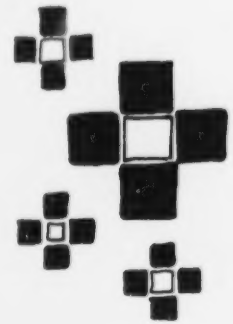
Jesus possesses a strong sense of mission. He is eager to go to other villages. His identity is tied up with his ministry to teach and to heal.

Leader Jesus was a strong educator. What responses do we give to people searching for us? What are some ways we keep alive our sense of mission?

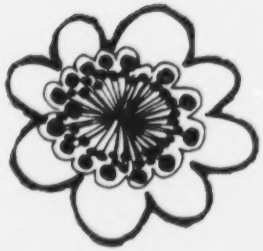
REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1. What experience of Jesus in this section of Mark's Gospel touches me the most? Why?

2. In this passage Jesus is seen as healer and compassionate presence. How can I express this in my school as administrator?



3. What are some ways I keep alive my enthusiasm for my ministry?



CLOSING RITUAL

Music

Reader — Matthew 5:13-16
"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but it is thrown out and trampled under foot.
"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Leader — You are salt...you are light.

All — Thanks be to God.

Leader — Blessed are those who are convinced of their basic dependence on God, whose lives are emptied of all that doesn't really matter.

All — They are salt and light for our world.

Leader — Blessed are those who wear compassion like a garment; those who have learned to love others as they love themselves.

All — They are salt and light for our world.

Leader — Blessed are those who have learned that all they are is gift from God, who are content with their greatness and their smallness.

All — They are salt and light for our world.

Leader — Blessed are those who remember how much they have been forgiven, who are able to extend forgiveness to others.

All — They are salt and light for our world.

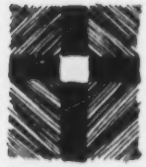
Leader — Blessed are those who build roads that join instead of walls that divide.

All They are salt and light for our world.

Leader Blessed are those whose love has been tried and found precious, genuine and lasting.

All They are salt and light for our world.

(Light tapers from the Christ candle and take a taste of salt.)



Leader For the gift of vision to see the things we sometimes miss because our eyes are earthbound.

All Give us your insight.

Leader For the gift of conviction to fully live the gospel we have been given.

All Give us your courage.

Leader For the gift of poverty to let go of all that clutters our lives.

All Give us your freedom.

Leader For the gift of stability to stay with what we believe and to endure the long haul.

All Give us your fidelity.

Leader For the gift of hope to wait for rebirth, for growth, for completion.

All Give us your patience.

Leader For the gift of wonder to be mindful of life's mysteries in us and in others, to stand on holy ground and worship.

All Give us your reverence.

Glory and Praise, vol. 2., #155 "What You Hear in the Dark"

Session written by Teressa Rose, VP

SESSION THREE

LEARNING TO EAT POPCORN

JESUS AND COMMUNICATION

Leader Preview

Materials	Bible, candle, instrumental music, tape recorder, bowl of popcorn, *Glory and Praise*, vol. 2, and 3, handouts
Time	Approximately 90 minutes
Setting	Bowl of popcorn could be used as the focal point to create interest. Keep this bowl separate from refreshments, which include popcorn.
Preparation	Open the session with the following information shared in your own way:

We all know how vital communication is to our ministry as administrators. Today we're going to look at Jesus and the way he communicated with various individuals and groups of people. We'll be reading and reflecting on several gospel passages that show Jesus in dialogue with others. We'll begin each section with a song. Then we'll read the passage together and allow a few moments for quiet reflection. And finally, we'll have time to share some of our thoughts or insights on the passage. Our aim is to see what we can learn about communication from watching and listening to Jesus.

Following each of the readings, you can play soft instrumental music while participants reflect on the passage. The questions can be used for discussion if desired.

If possible, give copies of the article "Down and Out Disciple Meets His Match" to three participants ahead of time so they can prepare to perform the story as a reader's theater. One can be the narrator, while the other two take the lines of Jesus and the disciple. The only prop needed is the bowl of popcorn.

After the reading of "Down and Out," the group could react to the story or conclude the session with a brief prayer service.

Four or more readers are needed.

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LEARNING TO EAT POPCORN

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

SONG — Glory and Praise, vol . 3, #183, "Beginning Today", verses 1 and 3

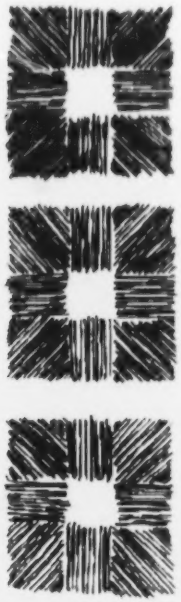
Leader — Our first passage is the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus. Let's start with a song.

Reader — Luke 19: 1-10
He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to your house, because he is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1) What factors caused Zacchaeus to climb that sycamore tree?

2) What is the relationship between Zacchaeus and the crowd?



2) This passage shows Jesus looking at people "with anger" and being "deeply grieved" by their attitude. Can you identify with these emotions of Jesus?

3) This passage depicts a conflict of values: a specific law governing the Sabbath versus a particular individual in need of healing. What are some of the conflicts in values that you grapple with as a school administrator?

SONG — Glory and Praise, vol. 2, #13, "Earthen Vessels"

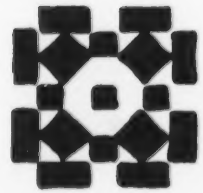
Leader — The third reading is about Jesus and the woman caught in adultery.

Reader — John 8:1-11
Then each of them went home, while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When then heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

3) What qualities of Jesus do you see in this passage? In other words, what are some of the characteristics of Jesus as communicator in this story?

4) The story doesn't tell us what Jesus and Zacchaeus talked about during their supper together. What do you imagine their conversation was like?

5) Have you ever felt like Zacchaeus? Or like Jesus in this passage?



SONG Glory and Praise, vol. 1, #32, "Lay Your Hands"

Leader Our second reading is Jesus' cure of the man with the withered hand.

Reader Mark 3: 1-6
Again he entered the synagogue; and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1) This incident, which occurs early in the ministry of Jesus, reveals that Jesus had already made enemies. "They kept an eye on Jesus...hoping to bring an accusation against him." Have you ever felt in your ministry as administrator that you have "enemies"–that is, individuals who are watching your every move? If so, how do you handle this?

The response is "Lord, hear our prayer."

Reader	That in our ministry we may take the time to notice people as individuals, we pray to the Lord...
Reader	That by our words and actions, we may inspire others to do good, we pray to the Lord...
Reader	That our feelings of anger and grief may become an impetus for us to work perseveringly for good, we pray to the Lord...
Reader	That we may extend forgiveness to all who have injured us in any way, we pray to the Lord...
Reader	That our values may always reflect true gospel values, we pray to the Lord...
Reader	That we may always make time for communication with God in prayer, we pray to the Lord...
	(Please add any other intentions you may wish to express):
Leader	Let us conclude with praying the "Our Father" together.
All	*Our Father...*

CLOSING SONG Glory and Praise, vol. 2, #111 "Lead Us On, O Lord"

–Session written by Melannie Svoboda, SND

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1) The scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus, "What do you say about this case?" Have you ever been in a similar situation--where you felt others were trying to trap you?

2) "Let the man among you who has no sin be the first to cast a stone." How is Jesus' response the "perfect" response?

3) How does Jesus treat the woman?

4) In your ministry as administrator, do you have opportunities to extend forgiveness to others--students? faculty members? staff? parents?

5) Looking back at all three gospel passages, what qualities do you see in Jesus that make him an effective communicator?

Leader — We have seen Jesus relating to individuals and groups in these three gospel passages. In many instances, we can relate to Jesus and the people he dealt with. We'd like to conclude with another incident between Jesus and a modern, contemporary disciple. This encounter is not found in any of the gospels. It is an imaginative encounter written by a well-known contemporary storyteller, Father John Shea. The passage is entitled, "A Down-and-Out Disciple Meets His Match." (U.S. Catholic, April 1987, pp. 27-29.)

Reader — God, we thank you for this time together--for time to reflect on Jesus and the way he communicated with individuals in his ministry. Mindful of our needs, we offer these petitions:

"You don't like to be noticed?"

"As a matter of fact, I don't."

The disciple closed his eyes. When he opened them, Jesus was still there, and smiling.

"Why did you come?"

"To teach you how to eat popcorn." Jesus looked pleased with himself.

The disciple looked down at the bowl of popcorn on the table. "Are you going to toy with me?" he said, miffed.

"I am not toying with you. I always come to seek what is lost; and when people are searching through my story at midnight like it was a medicine cabinet, it is usually a sign they are lost."

"Like hell I'm lost," the disciple shouted.

"Like hell you're not," Jesus smiled back.

Their eyes locked. The disciple was the first to look away.

"It's a mild case of mid-life crisis. I'll be over it in a couple months." The disciple gave a 'what can I tell you' shrug of his shoulders.

"Is that what they are calling temptation these days--mid-life crisis?"

The disciple laughed in spite of himself.

Slowly Jesus reached over to the bowl of popcorn, took one piece, and popped it into his mouth. Jesus' obvious enjoyment made the disciple shake his head.

"Even God can't eat only one piece of popcorn," said the disciple.

"Especially God," said Jesus. "Try some."

The disciple instinctively took a handful of popcorn but then let some fall back into the bowl. He put the pieces in his mouth two or three at a time.

When both of them had finished chewing, Jesus spoke in a very gentle voice. "You have been with me now a long time, and you are wondering whether it is all worth it. You've got your hand on the plow and your head on backwards."

"It used to be easy," the disciple said, rummaging his memory. "You died for me, and I owed you; so I signed up. But now I ask, who asked you to die for me?"

"My Father, of course."

"I never asked you to."

"You wouldn't. You're the type who doesn't like to be noticed. You would rather die yourself."

The disciple's head snapped straight back like someone had just pounded a fist into his chin. Before he could respond, Jesus had a suggestion.

"I think you follow me because you like my teachings."

"You've got to be kidding. Some of them make sense. But most of them I don't get, and all of them are too hard."

"Name one."

"Anyone who lusts after a woman in his heart has already committed adultery."

"Name another."

The disciple laughed. Jesus laughed at the disciple's laughter.

"You know one of the worst times," Jesus' voice was mellow and reflective, "was after my father raised me. Mary went to the tomb and found two angels but not my body. The angels asked, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She tells them she

A DOWN-AND-OUT DISCIPLE MEETS HIS MATCH

by Father John Shea

It was a wind-blasted winter evening, close to midnight, in the year of Our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Eighty-Six; and the doors of the apartment were locked. Inside, the disciple was eating popcorn and riffling through the Gospels. He was reading at top speed, flipping pages, hoping a word, a sentence, a story would make him stop. He was looking for something; but he wasn't sure what it was.

Suddenly Jesus appeared and sat down in the chair opposite him. The disciple blanched. He shook, rubbed his eyes, looked away and looked back. Jesus stubbornly stayed put. Finally Jesus said, "Got anything to eat?"

"I get it," said the disciple. "That's what you did after you rose. When the disciples thought you were a ghost, you asked for something to eat. It reassured them you were real."

"I was hungry. What is that stuff?"

"Popcorn." The disciple passed the bowl over to Jesus. "Try some, Lord," he said. The words sounded absolutely ludicrous. He consoled himself with the thought that he didn't say, Mister Lord.

Jesus took one piece of popcorn and looked at it like he was examining a diamond with an eyepiece.

"Wonderful shape," Jesus said, "and each one is just a little different. I like them."

The disciple became a little uneasy. He had never heard popcorn referred to as "them." And how did he know he liked them if he hadn't tasted them?

Jesus put one piece in his mouth and chewed it carefully for close to a minute. The disciple grabbed a handful.

"Not enough salt," Jesus finally said.

"Salt is not good for you," warned the disciple.

"I was always one for a lot of salt," said Jesus. "Hey," Jesus raised his finger in the air like he was about to give a teaching, "has anyone tried putting butter on this stuff?"

"It's been done. Besides, butter's not good for you either."

"You are a very careful person," said Jesus.

"Thanks," said the disciple. "Here, have some more." The disciple raised the bowl of popcorn off the table and offered it to Jesus.

"No thanks."

"You are the only person I know who can eat only one piece of popcorn and stop."

"Of course; I'm God," Jesus said and laughed.

The disciple did his best to chuckle.

"How come when you eat popcorn," Jesus said as he stroked his chin, "you try to get as much into your mouth as possible; and it spills out, and you have to pick it off your shirt and put it back in your mouth?"

"Oh, God, I knew this was going to happen."

"Why does everybody say that when I'm around," asked Jesus, a bit irritated. "What did you know was going to happen?"

"You notice everything and make remarks."

doesn't know what has happened to my body, and it is driving her crazy with grief. *All the time I'm standing right behind her.* She turns and looks right at me. I decide to ape the angels. 'Woman,' I say, 'why are you weeping?' Then I point to myself like a little boy on stage and say in gentle and joyous mockery, 'Who is it that you are looking for?' It was a little showy; but I was happy to see her. But she says, 'Sir.' She calls me 'Sir.' That 'sir' killed me a second time. I realized that she didn't recognize me. She thinks I'm the gardener and wants to know if I have any information about the whereabouts of my own body. I cry out in her pain and mine, 'Mary!' And she knows me. It was only when I said her name that she found my body. That's what I meant about lust. You know what I mean?"

"No."

"Think about it."

"Tell me about your Father."

"Love to. I was floating on my back in the Sea of Galilee. The water was holding me up effortlessly. It was buoying me up and stretching me out and, later I reflected, getting me ready to receive. I was looking straight up into the sky. No clouds. Just a blue so deep it was hard to look at. Then suddenly the sky fell into me. I felt like infinite azure. It was my father playing around. Have you ever felt like infinite azure?"

"Sometimes."

"Have I ever made you feel like infinite azure?"

"Not in a long time."

"How about finite aquamarine?"

"Don't mock me!"

"A definitely limited indigo?"

"Cut it out!"

"Look it!" Jesus grabbed his disciple's shoulders and looked into his eyes. "You are drowning in self-pity. Play with me. I can't take dismal disciples."

The disciple put his head down. He did not look at Jesus.

After a couple of minutes, Jesus asked, "What are you thinking about?"

"You tell me. I thought you could read hearts."

"Only when the eyes move. What's going on?"

"Why don't you just go away."

"I can't. I told you. I came to seek what is lost. I'm the Messiah."

"The scholars say you didn't use titles for yourself."

"You read too much, and you are trying to get me off the subject like the woman by the well."

"What's the subject?"

"You."

"Well, did you use titles?"

"Is there any mule in your lineage? Okay. I'll tell you. Back in those days, people were overeager to believe in messiahs, so I didn't mention it. Today, people are overeager not to believe in messiahs, so I say it. I offended by not saying it; and I see I embarrass you by saying it."

"You do not. I am a believer."

"You are an embarrassed believer."

"Well, wouldn't you be?" The disciple stood up and walked away from the table. "Here I am, a modern person, looking to a first-century Jew for the meaning of life? There are a lot of other models around."

"Someone a little more in step with the times?" asked Jesus.

"Right!"

"Like Lee Iacocca."

"You're mocking me again."

"You are thinking of divorcing me quietly, aren't you?" Jesus said.

"It has crossed my mind."

"My friend, you need more chutzpah. Blessed are those who are not embarrassed by me."

The disciple sat back down at the table. There were no words for a long time.

Then Jesus said, "There was a bank robber who planned a heist for a long time. He had worked out the details and was ready to go. But when he got to the bank teller's window, he suddenly panicked and asked for directions to the washroom."

"Hah, you're saying I can't carry through what I set out to do."

"I'm saying risk the salt on the popcorn."

"Jesus," the disciple said in an exasperated voice. "I'm going to lay it on the line. You walk too fast: I can't keep up."

"Better to be out of breath behind me than ahead of everyone else."

"I want a more moderate master so I can be a better disciple."

"You are a perfect disciple--you cannot receive my death, you cannot live up to my teachings, my father scares you, and you do not know how to eat popcorn."

"That may be accurate, but it is hardly perfect."

"My friend, that is the way of the earth. Why live out of something as small as you are? Love me because I am large enough to betray. But I do not think that you are happy in the land of mercy."

"God, you are a bittersweet experience."

"There is no lie in me."

"Why do you say things so harshly?"

"Peter used to say that I was the only one who could say, 'God loves you' and get everybody mad."

The disciple laughed. So did Jesus.

"You laugh at the right places," said Jesus. Then suddenly he asked, "So, are you going to stick around?"

"Where will I go? You have the words of eternal life."

"No fair stealing Peter's lines."

"Will you stick around with someone like me?" The disciple sighed like some great buildup of pressure had been released.

"Is that what this is all about?" asked Jesus. "You know all things, you know that I love you."

"No fair stealing Peter's lines. Why did you say that?"

"When Peter said it to me, it blew me away. I hoped it might do the same for you."

"But I don't know everything."

"You know enough."

"I know that even when I want you to go away, I don't want you to go away."

"East of Eden we call that love," said the master, and tears ran freely down his face.

In imitation of his master, the disciple cried.

For a long time there were no words, only the silence of communication.

"You know," Jesus finally said, "after Lazarus came back to life, he told me that what woke him up in the tomb was the sound of my tears."

"I can believe it," said the disciple.

Jesus smiled and reached for a third piece of popcorn. The disciple also took a piece. Jesus closed his eyes to savor better. The faithful disciple did likewise. When the disciple opened his eyes, Jesus was gone. But there was an inner, incredible lightness to his being, that the disciple knew where Jesus had vanished to.

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SESSION FOUR

SUSTAINING THE JOURNEY

TRUSTING GOD'S POWER

Leader Preview

Materials Bible, Glory and Praise, vol. 2, meditation tapes, tape recorder, bowl of water, small stones, dish

Time Approximately 90 minutes

Setting Create a focal point by placing an open Bible and a bowl of water on a table.

Preparation Open the session by playing music for 2-3 minutes. Invite participants to select a stone. Begin reading, softening tape volume as the reading begins.

For the "sharing," direct small or large groups to form in which each person shares and reflects on the topic questions. Begin with the saying each person selected and listen to the response each wishes to share.

Following the "sharing," invite participants to prayer. During this time you may want to play a meditation tape. After a few moments invite participants to state a situation he or she is "thirsting for" in his or her school.

Prior to the closing song invite participants, in the spirit of Moses, to exchange their stones for life-giving water by leaving the stone by the bowl and blessing it with water.

Two readers are needed.

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SUSTAINING THE JOURNEY

Leader	"God is a great underground river that no one can dam up and no one can stop." (Meister Eckhart)
All	*Let us come to the water and quench our thirst.*
Leader	"The soul that is full of wisdom is saturated with the spray of a bubbling fountain-God himself." (Hildegard of Bingen)
All	*Let us come to the water and quench our thirst.*
Leader	"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7: 37-38)
All	*Let us come to the water and quench our thirst.*
Leader	"Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Is. 55:1)
All:	*Let us come to the water and quench our thirst.*
Leader:	"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35)
All:	*Let us come to the water and quench our thirst.*
Leader:	"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give them will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." (John 4:13)
All:	*Let us come to the water and quench our thirst.*
SONG	Glory and Praise, vol. 2, "Come to the Water", verses 1 and 2

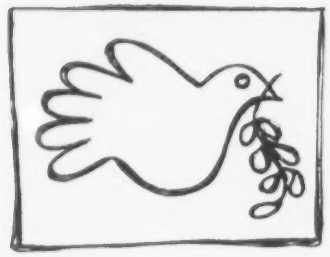
Leader Select one saying (Eckhart, Hildegard, John 7:37-38, Isaiah 55:1, John 6:35, John 4:13) and quietly reflect on these questions (10 to 15 minutes).

1. How does this saying relate to me as a leader?

2. How do I personally get in touch with Jesus, the life-giving water?

3. What do I "thirst for" in my school's faith community?

4. Complete the sentence, "I let God quench my thirst when I feel _____ and _____."



SHARING

Prayer

Reader Gospel of Matthew 14: 29-33 (Jesus saves Peter on the water)

Pause

Reader "Come, Walk on the Water with Me"

Come, walk on the water with me!
I'm in the mood for impossible things!
Let's heal the world today.
Let's touch everything we see
and change it to gold
and our hearts, let's change to flesh (Ezekiel 36:26)
No more stones for us.

Let's look at everything that could be
and believe
that
it will be
if we dare
to walk on water
scared.

Come, walk on the water with Me!
I'm a little bit scared
but I feel beautiful
so, scared and beautiful we'll go.
We'll be careful at first
but not very.

Being careful is for the very scared.
The kingdom of God is not found
in being careful
but in taking chances.

Come, walk on the water with Me!
Let's take the chance of staying up
of moving on
of being seen.

I feel scared and beautiful
I'm in the mood for impossible things.
I feel scared because it's impossible.
I feel beautiful because it's not impossible.
(Mark 9:24)

Come!
Walk on the water with me!

Poem by Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB.

SONG

Glory and Praise, vol. 2, "Come to the Water," versus 3 and 4

–Session written by Kathryn Knoll, SNJM, and Mary Burke, SNJM.

SESSION FIVE

WHOLLY, HOLY

HOLY GROUND

Leader Preview

Materials	Bible; copies of "Holy Ground;" tape of song "Holy Ground;" bowl of holy water; pine branch or other appropriate sprinkler.
Time	Approximately 60 minutes
Setting	Place the open Bible on a center table along with the bowl of holy water and sprinkler. When the group gathers together, distribute the copies of the hymn and play the tape.
Preparation	Identify participants to be leaders 1, 2, and 3. Open the session. Prior to the discussion, allow 10-15 minutes for quiet reflection on the seven questions. Then reconvene and allow the group about 30 minutes for as much sharing as each feels comfortable in doing. Following the discussion, invite each member to take a few minutes to prepare a petition for his/her school. As each offers a prayer, the group responds, "Lord, hear our prayer." Prior to the closing blessing, explain the ritual. As the holy water and branch/sprinkler are passed each blesses the person to the right on the head and hands. When all have been blessed, take the sprinkler and sprinkle the holy water in four directions praying for the blessing of our kind and gentle Lord on all the schools represented. If the size of the group permits, stand in a circle. If desired, the tape "Holy Ground" can be played softly in the background during the closing blessing.

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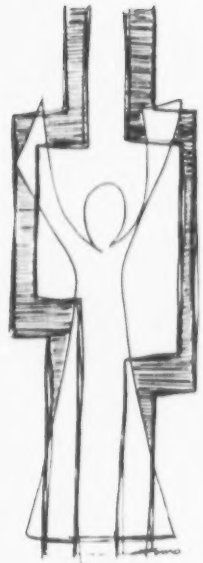
WHOLLY, HOLY



Reader — Exodus 3: 1-5
Moses was keeping the flock of his father in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the Lord saw that he had turned to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Leader 1 — This place that I call school...
holds no burning bush...
is no remarkable sight...
But this place that I call school
is the place from which and to which
God calls me each day...
Indeed, this place, this school
is HOLY GROUND.

For our God is present and where God is is holy.

Leader 1 — For the times, Lord, that I lost sight of the fact that you are truly present in my school...

All — *Lord, have mercy.*

Leader 1 — For not sensing your presence in all those I meet within my school...

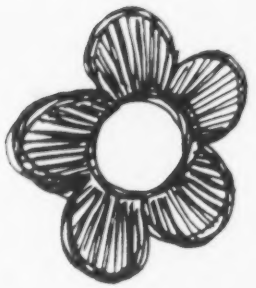
All — *Lord, have mercy.*

Leader 1 — For the times I have taken the sacredness of my school for granted...

All — *Lord, have mercy.*

Leader 1 — For the special folks who walk and talk and teach and learn within my school...

All	*Thank you, Lord.*
Leader 1	For the graces given and prayers heard....
All	*Thank you, Lord.*
Leader 1	For lessons taught and lessons learned, for ringing bells, and young people's laughter...
All	*Thank you, Lord.*
Leader 1	For patience with myself and others...
All	*I ask you, Lord.*
Leader 1	For a mind blessed with wisdom, a heart filled with love, and a will that has courage...
All	*I ask you, Lord.*
Leader 1	For the ability to communicate my belief that my school is Holy Ground...
All	*I ask you, Lord.*
Together	*First verse of "Holy Ground."*
Reader 2	Matthew 8: 1-3, 14-15; 9: 20-22 When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed... When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up from behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well."



Leader 2 These hands that I call mine...
have never cured...
have never touched the tassel of His cloak...
But these are the hands with which I write,
I comfort and console...
Indeed, these hands, my hands
are HOLY HANDS.

For God works through these hands and
so these hands are holy.

Leader 2 For the times I have written a general memo that was really aimed at only one person—one with whom I did not want to deal...

All *Lord, have mercy.*

Leader 2 For not reaching out to touch where there is hurt...

All *Lord, have mercy.*

Leader 2 For slamming a door, clenching a fist...

All *Lord, have mercy.*

Leader 2 For all the times you have let your gentle grace flow through these hands...

All *Thank you, Lord.*

Leader 2 For the warmth that others feel through my hands.

All *Thank you, Lord.*

Leader 2 That the young people we have taught to write and draw, paint and play may always be blessed...

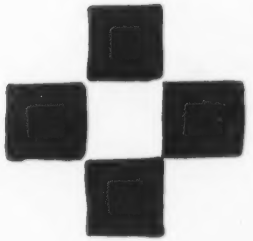
All *I ask you, Lord.*

Leader 2 That teachers of other days whose hands are now arthritic and pained may be comforted and consoled...

All *I ask you, Lord.*

Leader 2 That parents who labor with their hands may know the rewards of their labors...

All *I ask you, Lord.*



TOGETHER Second verse of "Holy Ground."

Reader 3 Isaiah 6: 3-8
And one called to another and said:
"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory."

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here I am, send me!"

Leader 3 These lips that I call mine...
have never joined the Seraphim...
have never experienced purging
by an ember...

But these are the lips with which I
correct and admonish, comfort and
console, teach and explain...
Indeed, these lips, my lips
are HOLY LIPS.

For God speaks through these lips and
so these lips are holy.

Leader 3	For the time I have not spoken the whole truth...
All	*Lord, have mercy.*
Leader 3	For sharp words to staff or students, for cutting off someone who needed to ventilate...
All	*Lord, have mercy.*
Leader 3	For omitting the praise that would have cheered...
All	*Lord, have mercy.*
Leader 3	For the words of strength you have helped me to speak...
All	*Thank you, Lord.*
Leader 3	For the smiles I have given and for those I have received...
All	*Thank you, Lord.*
Leader 3	That I may never hurt another by the words I speak...
All	*I ask you, Lord.*
Leader 3	That I may find and speak words that others need to hear...
All	*I ask you, Lord.*
Leader 3	That my speech may always reveal the wonderful fact that I am your disciple...
All	*I ask you, Lord.*

TOGETHER Last verse of "Holy Ground."

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1. Do I walk in the consciousness that my school is not an ordinary place, but rather a place set apart, a place where God is present, a place that is Holy Ground?

2. Do I truly believe that my hands are Holy Hands ...my lips are Holy Lips...because God works through my hands and through my lips?

3. Do my faculty and staff, my students and parents share this vision?

4. Can strangers who come sense our vision...by the words they hear...the words they read...the actions they observe?

5. Can people grow and blossom and flower in my school because they are on Holy Ground?

6. For what and for whom do I pray...
Lord, have mercy...Christ have mercy...

7. For what and for whom do I say...
Thank you, Lord...

-Session written by Josephine Ortner, PBVM.

SESSION SIX

AMEN

PRAYER

Leader Preview

Materials	Bible; candle; instrumental music; tape player; Glory and Praise, vol. 2; handouts; recording of "Our Father" (optional)
Time	Approximately 90 minutes
Setting	Comfortable room arrangement conducive for reflection. If possible, areas were participants can go off for individual reflection.
Preparation	Leader should set up the room for opening prayer, light the candle, arrange chairs, play soft music. After the first reading, give a few moments of silence for reflection on the passages from Luke. Follow with petitions. Following the leader's prayer after the petitions, distribute copies of "25 Quotations on Prayer," by Melannie Svoboda, SND. Encourage participants to go off by themselves for about 30 minutes and reflect on the quotations. Participants should rejoin the group prepared to discuss the five questions presented in the session. Begin and end the closing prayer: reflection on the "Our Father," by singing the Our Father together. Soft instrumental music playing in the background would help create a reflective atmosphere for the reading. Four readers are needed.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AMEN

Leader — Since our theme today is prayer, it is only fitting, that we begin our time together by praying together. Let us take a few moments to recall God's presence in our midst...and to ask God's blessings on our sharing today.

SONG — Glory and Praise, vol. 2, #128, "Only in God"

Reader — Luke 11: 1-13 (Jesus' teachings on prayer)
He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day your daily bread.
And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive
everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial."

As he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

REFLECTION

Leader — Our response to our petitions will be, "Lord, hear our prayer."

That we may continue to pray and work for the coming of God s Kingdom, we pray to the Lord...

All — *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Leader — That we may extend forgiveness to all those who have injured or harmed us in any way, we pray to the Lord...

All — *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Leader — That we may ask forgiveness of those whom we have injured, we pray to the Lord...

All — *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Leader — That we may be persistent and persevering in our prayer, we pray to the Lord...

All — *Lord, hear our prayer.*

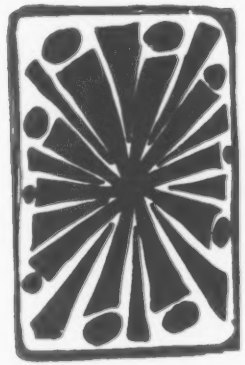
Leader — That we may never hesitate to make our needs known to God in prayer, we pray to the Lord...

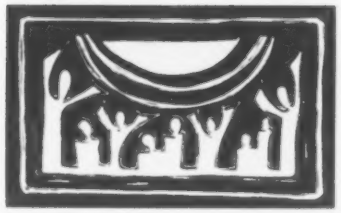
All — *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Leader — That we may grow in our appreciation of the value of prayer in our everyday lives, we pray to the Lord...

All — Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader — Let us pray. God, like the disciples of old we say: teach us to pray. More than that, we ask you to give us a greater understanding of the role of prayer in our spiritual lives. Help us to see the vital connection between contemplation and action, between letting go and hanging onto, between loving you and loving others. We ask this as we ask all things through Jesus, your son, and the power of the Spirit. Amen.





REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1) Of all 25 quotations, which one or two do you like the best? Why do you think this is so?

2) Are there any quotations that you didn't like? Why?

3) What are some of the ways you pray? When? Where? How?

4) With regard to prayer, what is your greatest difficulty and challenge? How are you trying to deal with this?

5) How would you describe the relationship between your prayer and your ministry as leader?

CLOSING PRAYER — Reflection on the "Our Father"

SING — Our Father

Reader 1 — Our Father

All — *Our Father*

Reader 1 — Father. Not mine...not yours...not hers...not his...not theirs...But our Father. Held by all...together...as one...A possession that binds us together as brothers and sisters.

Our Father. Our Mother. God as loving parent...giver of life...nurturer of life...one who cares for...looks after...tends to.

Reader 2 — God...so far above us...beyond us...One filled with love...with goodness...Yet all is directed toward us, toward me. God, becoming one of us...in the person of Jesus. God...the person who waits for us at the end of our journey with open arms...welcoming us home, to heaven.

Reader 3 — Hallowed be thy name.

All — *Hallowed be thy name.*

Reader 3 — Hallowed...blessed...consecrated...made holy. A name...designating a real person...an individual...someone to be respected...someone to be addressed...someone to be called.

Reader 1 — Thy kingdom come.

All — *Thy kingdom come.*

Reader 1 — THY kingdom...Not MY kingdom...Not OUR kingdom... But THY kingdom...A kingdom perhaps not always in accord with my vision, my expectations, my plan. God's kingdom...God's dream for us. May that dream be realized...in all of us. May it COME we pray...realizing that in one sense, the kingdom is already here in our midst. But in another sense, the kingdom is not yet...not quite. We live straining toward the future...not looking back...always looking ahead...looking forward.

Reader 2 — Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All — *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Reader 2 — Why is it so hard to say these words? Thy...will...be...done. THY will...not MY will...Oh, sure sometimes our wills are in sync...But sometimes they seem in clear opposition. It's those times I need to say these words the most.

Reader 3 — Give us this day our daily bread.

All — *Give us this day our daily bread.*

Reader 3	Give us...We admit it: we don't have what we need...we realize our dependency...we acknowledge it...we ask. THIS day...not yesterday...not tomorrow...but THIS day...this today. Our daily bread...Not so much physical bread, but the "manna" of hope and courage and perseverance that we need to continue our journey of faith. We ask enough just for today... And we trust for tomorrow.
Reader 1	And forgive us our trespasses.
All	*And forgive us our trespasses.*
Reader 1	Forgive us, God...we sin...we fail...we make mistakes.
Reader 2	As we forgive those who trespass against us.
All	*As we forgive those who trespass against us.*
Reader 2	May we forgive others, God...Those who disappoint us...hurt us...act unjustly towards us...annoy us...try our patience...May we forgive them, God, realizing all the times we have been forgiven by you.
Reader 3	And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
All	*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*
Reader 3	Temptation...that which distracts us...lures us off the better path...blinds us to your goodness...makes us forget what we really want and where we're really going. Evil...all that is not of you, God...that which is perverted...twisted...malignant...From this, we beg deliverance, God.
Reader 1	Amen.
All	*Amen.*
SONG	Our Father

–Session written by Melannie Svoboda, SND

25 QUOTATIONS ON PRAYER

by Melannie Svoboda, SND

1 "With me, prayer is lifting up the heart, a look towards heaven, a cry of gratitude and love uttered equally in sorrow and joy; in a word, something noble, supernatural, which enlarges my soul and unites it with God."

(Therese of Lisieux)

2 "Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living."

(Abraham Heschel)

3 "Granting that we are always in the presence of God, yet it seems to me that those who pray are in God's presence in a very difference sense; for they, as it were, see that God is looking upon them."

(Teresa of Avila)

4 "The wish to pray is prayer itself."

(George Bernanos)

5 "We never need to pray so earnestly as when we cannot lay hold of any pleasure in prayer."

(Francois Fenelon)

6 "All real prayer must begin in wonder."

(Tad Dunne, SJ)

7 "A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who is not."

(Anonymous)

8 "There is nothing that makes us love a person so much as praying for him."

(William Law)

9 "Prayer is not asking for things–not even for the best things; it is going where they are."

(Gerald Heard)

10 "It is not well for a person to pray cream, and live skim milk."

(Henry Ward Beecher)

11 "Only a theoretical deity is left to anyone who has ceased to commune with God, and a theoretical deity saves no one from sin and disheartenment."

(Henry Fosdick)

12 "You have to have darkness to find a picture on the sensitive plate, and you have to have prayer to bring out the invisible presence of God."

(Fulton Oursler)

13 "No one ever prayed heartily without learning something."

(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

14 "Prayer is not a vain attempt to change God's will; it is a filial desire to learn God's will and to share it."

(George Buttrick)

15 "If you are too busy to pray, you are too busy."

(Anonymous)

16 "How can you define prayer, except by saying that it is love? It is love expressed in speech, and love expressed in silence. To put it another way, prayer is the meeting of two loves: the love of God and our love."

(Catherine de Hueck Doherty)

17 "A single grateful thought towards heaven is the most complete prayer."

(Lessing)

18 "To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord–ever present, all-seeking, within you."

(Theophane the Recluse)

19 "Pray as you can and do not try to pray as you can't. Take yourself as you find yourself; start from that."

(Dom Chapman)

20 "Courage is fear that has said its prayers."

(Anonymous)

21 "Seek in reading and you will find meditation. Knock in prayer and it will be opened in contemplation."

(St. John of the Cross)

22 "Prayer can be real prayer even when it is not filled with bliss. Prayer can be like a slow interior bleeding, in which grief and sorrow make the heart's blood of the inner person trickle away silently into his own unfathomed depths."

(Karl Rahner)

23 "Too many people regard prayer as a formalized routine of words, a refuge for weaklings or a childish petition for material things. We sadly undervalue prayer when we conceive it in these terms, just as we should underestimate rain by describing it as something that fills the birdbath in our garden."

(Paul Claudel)

24 "The person whose prayer is so pure that he never asks God for anything does not know who God is, and does not know himself, for that person does not know his own need in God."

(Thomas Merton)

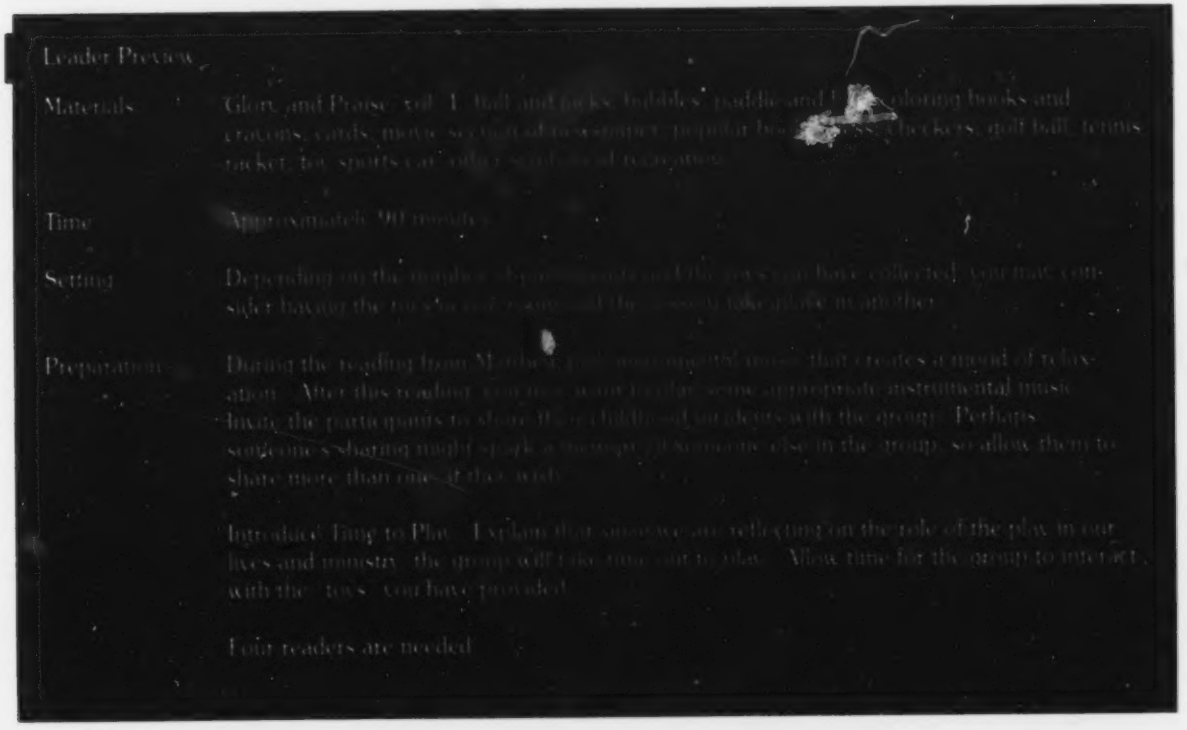
25 "A lot of the trouble about prayer would disappear if we only realized–really realized, and not just supposed that it was so–that we go to pray not because we love prayer but because we love God."

(Hubert van Zeller)

SESSION SEVEN

THE GAMES WE PLAY

PLAY



Leader Preview

Materials

Time

Setting

Preparation

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THE GAMES WE PLAY

SONG	Glory and Praise, vol. 1, #4 "Play Before the Lord"
Reader 1	Reading Luke 10: 38-42 (Jesus visits Martha and Mary)
Leader	Taking some quiet time or a brief period of retreat during the day can help us relax and increase our productivity. Like Martha, we get so caught up in our work, we are unable to recognize the necessary advantages of taking short or longer periods of what Carl Sandburg called "creative solitude."
Reader 2	Reading Matthew 11: 28-30 (Come to Me and rest)
Reader 3	Reading Matthew 18: 1-5 (Who is the greatest?)
Leader	In addition to quiet and retreat time, we also need times for play, for fun and enjoyment. We should acknowledge the child-like spirit within ourselves. Let us close our eyes. Remember.. Imagine you are a child again. What did you enjoy doing most?...What games did you play?...Who were your friends?...Try to go back to a single thing or time you can remember from your childhood—a specific incident that was happy and joyful for you. Take a few minutes to reflect on that incident...
PRAYER	LET US CONCLUDE OUR PRAYER SERVICE WITH THIS SHORT PRAYER.
Leader	We must remind ourselves that playing begets happiness...
All	*Come to me...and I will give you rest. (Mt. 11:28)*
Leader	Playing allows us to let go of rigidity and burdensome cares...
All	*Learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart.* (Mt. 11:29)
Leader	Allow yourself to run free and enjoy nature.

All *You will find rest for your souls. (Mt. 11:29)*

Leader Play is not competitive—just fun...

All *My yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Mt. 11:30)*

Leader Laugh as you play...

All *He called a child whom he put among them. (Mt. 18:2)*

PLAY TIME

DISCUSSION

1. How did I feel about playing here today? Was it fun? Difficult? Easy? Uncomfortable? Awkward? Why did I feel as I did?

2. What did I gravitate toward? Would this be a new form of fun for me or one I already enjoy? Was it a game I especially enjoyed as a child?

3. When we play or relax, what feelings or emotions can we let go of for a while?

4. When was the last time I deliberately took some time to play or rejuvenate myself? Describe the incident.

5. What are some things that give me enjoyment or that provide relaxation for me personally?

CLOSING PRAYER

Reader 4: Reading Mark 10: 13-16

Leader There is a child in us who must stay alive if we are to grow in holiness. It is the same child Jesus placed in our midst when he told us that we could hardly expect to handle heaven unless we become like that child. The tired adult in us often needs to be reminded that we are in charge of that child. You and I have the power to let it live or bring about its early death. And so, our much-too-adult hearts challenge us today: go set free someone else's child by believing in your own. Take off your shoes and go. It's much like leading folks out of Egypt. Believe in your Moses and go...

Reader 1: Once upon a time when days were still fresh and new, ordinary and uncomplicated, I was a child free, and in love with everything: a bee buzzing, the wind in my hair, a branch to hang from, bare feet in the grass, dandelions and fairies, teddy bears.

Reader 2: I don't remember growing up. It must have happened while I wasn't looking, but it is obvious from my heart that is has happened, for I am less simple, more complicated, and more cluttered.

Reader 3: I would not choose to become a child again, but it is true that I am looking to them and searching in them for a simplicity and ordinariness that makes being an adult easier to bear and miracles easier to see.

Reader 4: Children are not too sophisticated to wonder, to take off their shoes, to reach out and up and all around, for that's where miracles are.

The child in me longs to touch everyone I know with the magic wand of littleness and perform that great miracle of enabling us to see that it's not too late to live happily ever after. The problem is so simple we could miss it. Our teddy bears we've thrown too far and how desperately we need them!

From Seasons of Your Heart, *by Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB. (HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.: New York, 1991.)*

Prayer service designed by Marilyn Johnson

SESSION EIGHT

GROWING HOPE

HOPE

Leader Preview

Materials	Bible; tape of instrumental music; tape recorder; Glory and Praise, vol. 3; candle; each person's vision statement; 4 paper cups and seeds for each participant; table; table covering
Time	Approximately 15 minutes
Setting	Light candle near the open Bible. Place cups with a few seeds in each around the candle and Bible. Play tape to create a mood for prayer.
Preparation	Ask participants to bring the vision statements they developed during their Shepherding the Shepherds retreat.
	If these are no longer accessible, invite participants to write a short vision statement prior to coming. This can be done by considering both the reality and potential of their leadership role in their own institution.
	The leader provides the transition between parts, building on what has been shared.

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GROWING HOPE

Leader — Let us begin our session with a reading from Luke.

Reader — Luke 24: 13-21 (Emmaus story)
Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place."

SILENT REFLECTION

Leader — Let us respond by praying a psalm of hope. *(Alternate sides responding.)*

Response — The way to Emmaus is more than a road.

Leader — It is an experience in human life.

Response — It is more than an outward change of scene.

Leader — It is an inward transformation of self.

Response — There are times in all of our lives when the road we walk...

Leader — ...begins to take on the same landmarks of disillusionment.

Response — The journey to Emmaus is an experience in the landscape of the heart.

Leader — It is an encounter with the hills and valleys of hope and despair.

Response — The path twists its way through fallen expectations and shattered dreams in search of new life.

Leader — At various times and stages in our personal journey we become familiar with its terrain.

Response — Whatever the reasons for our disappointment, the outcome is the same.

Leader — We find ourselves walking with the same heaviness of heart that the two disciples experienced.

All — Perhaps we find ourselves repeating the same haunting words, "We were hoping...we were hoping."

Leader — Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions based on the scripture reading.

1. What strikes me the most about the two disciples on their way to Emmaus?

2. What strikes me the most about Jesus in this passage?

3. How is the journey of these two people like mine?

4. Where is the road to Emmaus leading me today?

Reader — The two disciples on their way to Emmaus are speaking in the past tense. Yet, when people begin to speak of hope in the past tense, it has already become the language of despair. Past expectations cannot be the basis for tomorrow's hope. This past is gone. We can remember it with gratitude, we can flee from it with regret, or long for it with nostalgia; but we cannot hope in it or create a future from it.

"The present is not the goal of our hope, nor is it the end of our hope, but it is the beginning of our hope. If we cannot face life as it is, we will never be able to shape it into what we feel it ought to be. Now is the advent of Christian hope; it is the only available moment of choice and commitment. A Christian is a poet of trust. He or she seeks to embody the aspirations of his brothers and sisters. Such a person strives to take the hope we have in things and transform it into trust between people. This, essentially, is what we try to do every day as a leader in a Catholic school."

(Copyright 1975 by John Heagle. From A Contemporary Meditation on Hope, published by the Thomas More Press, Chicago.)

REFLECTION

DISCUSSION

1. Describe one instance when you called upon someone to help you hope.

2. Describe some way in which you, as leader, responded to someone who needed hope.

3. Give one example of how hope will get you through some situation which you are facing at school within the next few days/weeks.

Leader — If you made the Shepherding experience, you wrote out your vision for your school; you had a sense of newness and promise. As we take a few minutes to revisit this vision statement or one evolving from this reflection today, let's look for a passage that speaks of hope.

SHARING

Leader — The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins captures hope in language that stirs and warms.

Reader — From a poem by G. M. Hopkins

"...And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings."

(Poem by G.M. Hopkins, Oxford University Press, 1990.)

CLOSING RITUAL

Leader

This is the true message of hope. Let us renew our own hope, realizing that God is always with us--caring for us, watching over us, and supplying us with friends to support us.

Please form a circle around the table. Hope is the beginning of new life and promise. As a symbol of that hope which we hold as Catholic educators, let us each take a cup with the seeds in it and pass it to another person saying, "May the hope we share in Jesus Christ, be yours in the life of these seeds."

Glory and Praise, vol. 3, #187 "Let us Build the City of God"

-Session written by Patricia James Sweeney, SSJ.

SESSION NINE

POLAR BELLS

CHRISTMAS

Leader Preview

Materials Video television VCR book or audio tape of The Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin Boston 1985) instrumental Christmas music preferable chimes "O Come All Ye Faithful" tape recorder small jingle bells for each participant

Time Approximately 60 minutes

Setting Prior to the opening session create an atmosphere of quiet This could be done by placing the instrumental tape of Christmas music

Choose a location that includes Christmas decorations that adds to the spirit of the season. You may also consider using bells as a motif.

Preparation Share The Polar Express story with the group by watching the video reading the book or playing the audiotape. Give participants the reflective questions and allow about 20 minutes for individual reflection

If the group is meeting in a large space allow them to leave and find a quiet area. Set a time for their return.

After the short prayer following the sharing give each person a bell. You might invite the participants to place the bells on their desks in school as a reminder of the message of today's gathering

Later invite participants to turn to the person next to them and share a prayer of blessing at the end of the session

For the closing musical reflection the leader should invite the group to reflect quietly while a musical tape preferably Christmas chime music is played.

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POLAR BELLS

SONG "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (or another suitable hymn)

DISCUSSION

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

1. What did you think of *The Polar Express*? Why?

2. What are the times that you as administrator have heard "the ringing of the bell"? Can you describe a specific incident where you experienced the bell ringing?

3. What distracts you from hearing the bell ring? What times in your ministry has the bell been silent for you?

4. Are there members of your faculty whom you think no longer hear the ringing of the bell? How do you help restore its ringing for them?

5. Do parents of your students hear the bell and recognize all that they do to keep it ringing? How do you encourage and support them?

6. Do you think the students in your school are able to hear the bell? What are some of your experiences that help you know students believe the bell is ringing? How do you let students express the presence of the bell's ringing in their own lives?

SHARING

Leader Let us join in prayer for each other. May we continue to hear the ringing of the bell and help those with whom and to whom we minister hear its ringing.

PRAYER OF BLESSING

CLOSING MUSICAL REFLECTION

-Session written by Noreen White

SESSION TEN

SURPRISES IN THE SACKCLOTH

DEFINING PENANCE

Leader Preview

Materials	Bible, song books (Glory and Praise, vols. 1, 2, and 3), copies of the article, candle, incense, instrumental music, tape recorder
Time	Approximately 90 minutes
Setting	Have the Bible, candle and incense on a small table. Play soft instrumental music as a prelude to the opening prayer.
Preparation	The article "Sackcloths" and the discussion questions can be sent to each participant ahead, if your time together would limit the time of reading and reflection. Allow a short period for each person to review and reflect on the article before beginning the discussion. Allow about 30 minutes if you include the reading of the article and a period of reflection in your time together. This is the preferable approach. Five readers are needed.

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SURPRISES IN THE SACKCLOTH

Leader — We come here today to share a few thoughts and reflections on the role of penance in our lives as individuals and as administrators. Let us begin by joining in song together.

SONG — Glory and Praise, vol. 3, #182, "Beatitudes," verses 1 and 2 (or another appropriate hymn)

Leader — Let us now listen to a reading from the Gospel of St. Luke

Reader 1 — Jesus saw the crowds and went up on a hill, where he sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.
Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the kingdom of heaven belongs to them! Happy are those who mourn; God will comfort them!

Reader 2 — Happy are those who are humble; they will receive what God has promised! Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully!

Reader 3 — Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them! Happy are the pure in heart; They will see God!

Reader 4 — Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children! Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires; The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!

Reader 5 — Happy are you when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are my followers.

Be happy and glad, for a reward is kept for you in heaven! (Mt. 5: 1-12)

SILENT REFLECTION

Leader — Based on the reading we have just heard, let us offer these petitions to God. Our response will be: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader	That we may come to a greater appreciation of true happiness, let us pray to the Lord...
All	*Lord, hear our prayer.*
Leader	That we may live the spirit of the beatitudes both in our personal lives and in our ministry as principals, let us pray to the Lord...
All	*Lord, hear our prayer.*
Leader	That we may come to see penance not so much as a tolerance for pain but as a necessary component of loving relationships, let us pray to the Lord...
All	*Lord, hear our prayer.*
Leader	Please add any additional petitions you may have...
All	*Lord, hear our prayer.*
Leader	Let us conclude with the prayer that Jesus taught us:
All	*Our Father...*

SONG Glory and Praise, vol. 3, #182, "Beatitudes," versus 3 and 4 (or another song)

REFLECTION The article "Sackcloths Aren't for Sinners Anymore," by Mark Quinn.

DISCUSSION based on these questions:

1. The author says, "True spirituality is about relationships, not about tolerance for pain." What do you think he means? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

2. He also says, "The kind of self-discipline needed among Christians today is one that offsets alienation, isolation, indifference." Can you give examples of these three realities in the world in general? In your diocese? In your school? In your personal life?

3. The author suggests three forms of self-discipline: helpfulness, patience, and respect for the surroundings. How do you see yourself trying to practice these three forms of self-discipline in your ministry as a leader?

4. What is your most difficult "penance" as administrator? What are some of the ways you can help yourself in this regard? Is there anything we can do to help each other in this regard?

5. Is there anything else in this article that struck you—either because you agreed with it or took exception to it?

CONCLUDING RITE

Let us conclude by praying the beatitude prayer by Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB from *Seasons of Your Heart: Prayers and Reflections*.

Blessed are those who are convinced of their basic dependency on God, whose lives are emptied of all that doesn't matter, those for whom the riches of this world just aren't that important.
The kingdom of God is theirs. (Poor in spirit)
Blessed are those who know that all they are is a gift from God, and so they can be content with their greatness and their smallness, knowing themselves and being true to themselves.
For they shall have the earth to their heritage. (Lowly)

Blessed are those who wear compassion like a garment, those who have learned how to find themselves by losing themselves in another's sorrow.
For they too shall receive comfort. (Sorrowing)

Blessed are those who are hungry for goodness, those who never get enough of God and truth and righteousness.
For they shall be satisfied. (Hunger and thirst)

Blessed are the merciful, those who remember how much has been forgiven them, and are able to extend this forgiveness into the lives of others.
For they too shall receive God's mercy. (Show mercy)

Blessed are those whose hearts are free and simple, those who have smashed all false images and are seeking honestly for truth.
For they shall see God. (Single-hearted)

Blessed are the creators of peace, those who build roads that unite rather than walls that divide, those who bless the world with the healing power of their presence.
For they shall be called children of God. (Peace-makers)

Blessed are those whose love has been tried, like gold, in the furnace and found to be precious, genuine and lasting, those who have lived their belief out loud, no matter the cost or pain.
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Persecuted)

SONG

Glory and Praise, vol. 1, #38, "Only a Shadow," verses 1, 3, 5 or Glory and Praise, vol. 2, #81, "All Our Joy."

Session written by Melannie Svoboda, SND

SACKCLOTHS AREN'T FOR SINNERS ANYMORE

Doing Penance Revisited

By Mark Quinn

In the Nobel prize-winning novel *Kristin Lavransdatter* by Sigrid Undset, Lavrans at one point says to his wife, "I would like to sleep with you tonight, Ragnfrid." The woman seemed to stiffen in his arms —she drew away a little and said in a low voice: "We cannot. It is Fast-time."

The setting of this wonderful book is Norway in the 14th century. Attitudes were much different at that time. Fasting and abstinence were considered necessary to keep one's appetites under control. Every good Christian practiced these and other forms of self-denial in order to stay on good terms with God and the church.

Human nature has not changed all that much in 600 years. The high divorce rate and weight problems characteristic of our society suggest that our appetites still need to be held in check. But if people today are just as prone to lust, gluttony, and other excesses, then why did the Catholic church discontinue the Friday abstinence from meat? Why no more Ember Days? Why the increase in annulments for failed marriages? The message sent by the easing of these restrictions seems to be similar to that proclaimed by our culture: Enjoy yourself for you only go 'round once in life. Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you may die. Party on, dudes!

Is this really the signal that the church wants to sends? Does the church mean to tell us that our appetites are no longer a threat to our spiritual well-being? In other words, can a person be truly spiritual without practicing self-control? The answer is: absolutely not! If an individual is ruled by his appetites and must gratify every physical urge, then heaven will be nothing more than a big rock candy mountain, and God will be a wish-granting genie, activated by rubbing a vigil light.

Christ on the cross does not preach, "Satisfy yourself; you deserve it." On the contrary, Christ challenges us to deny our very selves, take up our crosses, and follow in his footsteps (Mark 8:34). Yet, Jesus is not a killjoy. He eats and drinks like other wandering preachers of his time. But he makes clear that if we focus our whole attention on bodily satisfactions, we will have no use for things of the spirit.

Why then has the church recently relaxed many of its demands for physical penance? Certainly not because people today do not need self-control. No, the church has down-played physical sacrifices to a certain extent, in order to lessen the danger of making holiness consist solely in self-discipline. We cannot measure our sanctity by the number of meals we skip. Anorexia is not angelic. True spirituality is about relationships, not about tolerance for pain. How much we love our neighbor is a better indication of holiness than the size of our waistline.

Fasting is no longer an annual necessity in our society, given modern efficiency in food distribution. Nor is periodic sexual abstinence the necessary safeguard for married women that it once was, due to the technological advances in birth control methods. No, it is not food or offspring that are in short supply. What we are short of is a sense of community. Too many people do not feel as if they belong, as if their lives mean anything, as if they are loved.

The kind of self-discipline needed among Christians today is one that offsets that isolation, alienation, indifference. Christians need to practice forms of self-control that increase caring, that build community, that foster healthy interrelatedness. They need the type of self-discipline that is other-centered, not fixated on self-improvement. In other words, they need new forms of what we used to call "doing penance." I offer three examples.

Helpfulness is the first form of self-discipline I would recommend. Helpfulness means the willingness to be of service to others. Boy Scouts accompanying little old ladies is the image that jumps to mind. And giving help often does require only momentary effort. But helpfulness is a demanding preoccupation if it is sustained over any period of time. An attitude of helpfulness means attentiveness to the needs of those around me. What can I do to make their

lives run a little more smoothly? How can I enhance human interactions in my office, my home, my club?

Helpfulness is a form of self-discipline if its primary goal is not to make me feel good about myself, but to assist others in coping with life. Helpfulness is not camouflage for trying to get people to carry out my own plans. Rather, helpfulness is a form of self-denial, aimed at bringing into existence what is best for all concerned.

The person who is truly helpful is not compulsive, but responsive. She meets real needs, either expressed or intimated by another. She does not squelch the other's initiative or put him in a position of dependency. Instead, she tries to move him toward self-sufficiency.

Nearly anyone can be of service on a single occasion — for example, in giving directions to a stranger. But helpfulness becomes real virtue when prolonged over weeks and years, and accompanied by a friendly attitude. On a recent trip to Washington, D.C., I was amazed at the unfailing helpfulness of everyone I encountered, from Secret Service men in the White House to secretaries in the Capitol. One congressional aide smilingly gave me the reason behind this willingness to be of assistance: "Everyone in Washington needs directions sooner or later." As do people everywhere else.

Helpfulness in biblical terms is the "oil of human kindness." It is not simply spontaneous, but is an art to be mastered. For someone to continue being helpful day in and day out, in spite of occasional ingratitude or suspicion, requires a high degree of self-conquest. Learning to be helpful is a very practical form of penance. No one can be truly helpful, I suspect, without being at the same time holy.

A second form of self-discipline serviceable for the typical American is patience in putting up with interruptions and inconveniences. Our family telephone rings at least twice a week as we sit down to supper. My daughter wants help with her homework any evening I try to concentrate on preparing my own work for the next day. The doorbell rings early Saturday morning to announce our call to conversion by two grinning Jehovah's Witnesses. Everyone has a personal agenda. When other people interrupt my agenda, I have to stop and ask myself, "Is the project I am trying to finish really more important than the need of this person right here in front of me?"

Penances not in keeping with the demands of real life tend to become an end in themselves. Ascetics often become eccentric rather than saintly because their practices of self-denial are unconnected with reality.

Modern life does not seem to require fasting and abstinence, good as these practices may be. A working mother needs all the energy she can muster. Staying up late to pray would not lead her to holiness but to inefficiency. The office worker in a skyscraper is more concerned about the colleague in the next cubicle than about the availability of grain at winter's end. Getting along with others is the human substratum in nearly every type of work. Putting up with others' idiosyncrasies. Tolerating their differences. Accepting them as they are. These are the acts of self-denial asked of people today. Instead of demanding that everyone conform to my expectations, I need to be patient with them, open to their viewpoint, tolerant of their individual style of acting.

Accommodating myself to the needs of others instead of insisting that they give in to me — this is the self-discipline of patience. It is a penitential practice much needed in the overcrowded, anthill existence modern life.

Patience is needed outside of human interaction as well. A string of 20 red lights on the way to work, or pigeon droppings on a new suit can set one's teeth on edge. A flooded basement or flat tire can be twice as aggravating as a meatless meal because they are beyond our control. We need patience to survive, humanly, with unexpected disruptions of our carefully crafted plans.

Practicing patience is essential in tightly scheduled life. The world around me does not conform to my time constraints. If I am to maintain my sanity, I must learn to bear up with unexpected delays and inconveniences. I must acquire the form of self-control called patience.

The third form of self-denial I want to recommend is respect for surroundings. To treat the world and its resources as a desert oasis rather than as a bottomless reservoir, is what I mean by respect for surroundings. The decisions I

make each day have broader ramifications than my immediate comfort. Do I drive to the store, use up petroleum, and spew more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, or ride a bike? Do I plant trees around my house to lower summer temperatures, or install whole-house air conditioning. Do I recycle my newspapers, bottles, and cans, or let the garbage man bury them in ever higher Mount Trashmores, while trusting the packagers to unearth new supplies of raw material to replace them? Iceland, Ireland, Italy and Greece were all denuded of trees centuries ago to provide warships for conquest. Do I want to eliminate the California redwood trees just so I can have patio furniture?

Martin Buber in his small classic, *I and Thou*, advised treating everything as if it were a person. If the world is viewed as a valued companion, rather than as a giant toy box, then I will support its efforts to maintain itself in beauty, balance, and abundance. I will be considerate of its legitimate needs, not rapacious in stealing its treasures.

Respecting my surroundings is like helping others and patience in that its importance is becoming ever more obvious as world population crowds us closer together. If we are to survive in human fashion and preserve quality of life for future generations, we need to ration the natural resources we consume. We need to reverence the world we live in.

Fasting and abstinence are not heralded as the high road to sanctity they once were. Spirituality can still not be developed without self-discipline. But there are methods of self-control eminently suitable for Christians today, methods that interact nicely with the demands of contemporary life and urban living. A Christian faithful to the demands of his or her state of life, patient with inconvenience, and respectful of the environment has already traveled far along the road to holiness.

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